the primitive Baldachino has been forbidden and the mediæval Reredos freely allowed. In old churches where the window often comes low down, and where it is now impossible to adopt the ancient arrangement of the beam with figures, &c., standing upon it; carved wooden triptychs might be used with great advantage and the Altar be placed a little way in front of the wall. We need not be afraid of hiding some part of the architecture. Such has certainly been the practice in ancient and more artistic days, and indeed it adds the charm of mystery, richness, and reserve.

It is time that our churches were better furnished and that more care and art were spent upon them; and on what could such care and art be better spent than on that which is designed to add dignity and beauty to the Christian Altar?

The Ancient and the Modern way of Building Parish Churches compared.—By J. T. Micklethwaite, F.S.A.

THE chief difference between ancient and modern church building lies in the fact that we build new churches and our ancesters seldom or never did so. Of course every church has had a beginning once, but that of our old Parish Churches is so far away, that history has nothing to tell us about it. At the most it can only tell us of one of them, that at this or that distant date it already existed. And nearly always a church was centuries old before the earliest work which we can find in it now was built. This is also true of some of the most ancient of the Cathedral and Abbey Churches, but the greater number of them are of far lower antiquity than the Parish Churches, and the dates of their foundations are well known. But even they, although we may find in them work which we assign to the period of their foundation, must very often have been preceded by earlier buildings. Not a few, especially amongst those of the Benedictines and the Black Canons, stand on the sites of still older Parish Churches or chapels, and the conflicting interests of the parishioners and the members of the new foundations bred many a bitter quarrel in later times. And even those, which like most of the Cistercian houses were built in uninhabited wilds, must generally have had something earlier than anything which now remains. It was a rule that no house should be occupied until it was provided with a church, cloister, and other necessary buildings. And when we read of Abbeys being founded and themselves again sending out colonies within a year or two of their foundations, it

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appears certain that temporary buildings were first erected and only gradually gave place to the substantial ones of stone, the ruins of which still exist. I do not however propose to follow up this subject now, except with respect to Parish Churches, because our modern churches almost all belong to that class and their designs are generally, at least intended to be, based upon the old.

The whole plan and character of our old churches is due to their having grown to be as we see them and scarcely ever having been *designed* to be it, as is nearly always the case with modern ones. The only examples we have of old Parish Churches which have been built new straight out of the ground, are those very rare ones like Winchelsea or Winchcombe, where the site of the church has itself been changed. Even where a fire or some such accident has made a general rebuilding necessary the form of the old has nearly always affected the new, and, although no actual remains of it may shew themselves, its influence may be traced. The twelfth century was a great building age, and we can trace back the architectural history of most Parish Churches to it. That we can only sometimes trace it further, is probably due to the fact that the earlier buildings were often of wood, and those of the twelfth century are the first stone churches which have occupied the sites. In a Paper* read at Lincoln two years ago, and which some of you may have heard, I endeavoured to trace the process by which these twelfth century churches were gradually altered, until the typical Parish Church of the fifteenth century had a form entirely different from that of three hundred years before. I will not go over that ground again now, but, assuming the fact and the order of the growth, I would say a little about the manner of it.

The services of the church were a part of the daily life of our ancestors in a very much greater degree than they are of ours. Every one attended them each Sunday and holy-day, and where it could be done it was usual at least to hear Mass before the first meal every day. "Meat and Mass hinder no man's work," says an old proverb. A few magnates had their chaplains and private chapels, but the great body of the people resorted to the Parish Church for what was to them almost a necessary of life, to be deprived of which even for the space of a few weeks was a thing not to be thought of. So whatever work might be going on at the church the services had to be kept up. We now meet such a case by hiring a temporary building which can serve for use for a year or two until the church is again ready. But "iron churches" had not been invented in the middle ages; and even if they had been, they would not always have served the turn, for works, which we now should get done in

* *On the growth of English Parish Churches*, read at the Lincoln Meeting of the Archæological Institute, and since printed in the *Archæological Journal*, vol. xxxvii., pp. 364-377.

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a few months, were then often spread over perhaps twice as many years. The church itself, or at least some considerable part of it, had always to be kept fit for use.

This fact of the churches being always kept in daily use had a very considerable influence upon the form that they assumed. For even where the new work was an entire, and, as it might appear to us at first sight, a simultaneous rebuilding of the whole, it was of necessity undertaken in parts, and each successive part had to be planned with respect to the older work already on the ground, with which indeed it generally had to be united for a time, even though there may have been from the first an intention of removing the old. The old work then gave a law to the new, and that in its turn did the same to what came after it. Thus a church may chance to owe the form it now has to one which existed on the same spot centuries before anything which we can find there now was built.

I am able to point to a church in your own county which affords an example of a far more complete rebuilding after a new style and fashion than is often met with. Absolutely nothing remains older than the existing work except a few carved stones built into the foundations, and I suspect originally belonging to a cross and not to the church at all. Yet even here we can find how the freedom of the designer has been tied by the older work. I refer to the Church of Helpringham. This, except the chancel, which is complete in itself, and a few years earlier than the rest, is of one work throughout, and looks like a free and unfettered design of the fourteenth century. Yet if we look closely into it we find that it is not really so.

Helpringham Church is now a fine and large building, but up to the thirteenth century it seems to have been a village church of the most modest type, and was probably very like what the neighbouring Church of Howell still is. The original church had only a simple nave and chancel such as I have indicated conjecturally on the plan. One or both aisles may have been added to the nave before the rebuilding, just as a north aisle has been added at Howell, but nothing now remains to tell of them. There is good reason for believing that no such addition was ever made to the chancel. This small church with its additions, whatever they may have been, is now all gone, and the oldest existing work is the present chancel, which, although its elevations have an earlier look, appears to belong to quite the end of the thirteenth century. Now this low chancel, which though of competent length seems curiously out of proportion with the fine and lofty nave, owes its proportion to the far earlier nave to which it was joined on, and in comparison with which it no doubt appeared to be a work of some architectural pretension.

It is not likely that when the good people of Helpringham built their chancel they had any formal intention of rebuilding the

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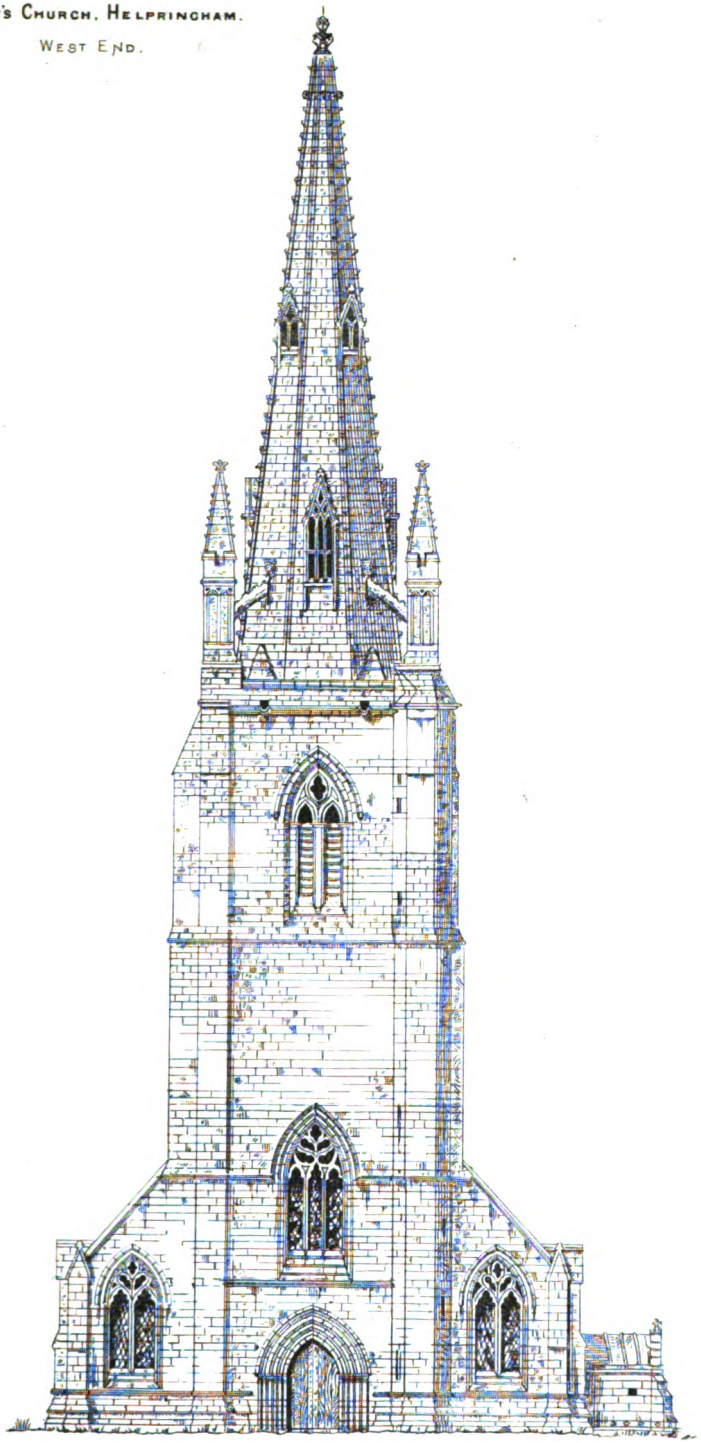
S. Andrew's Church, Helpringham.

West End.



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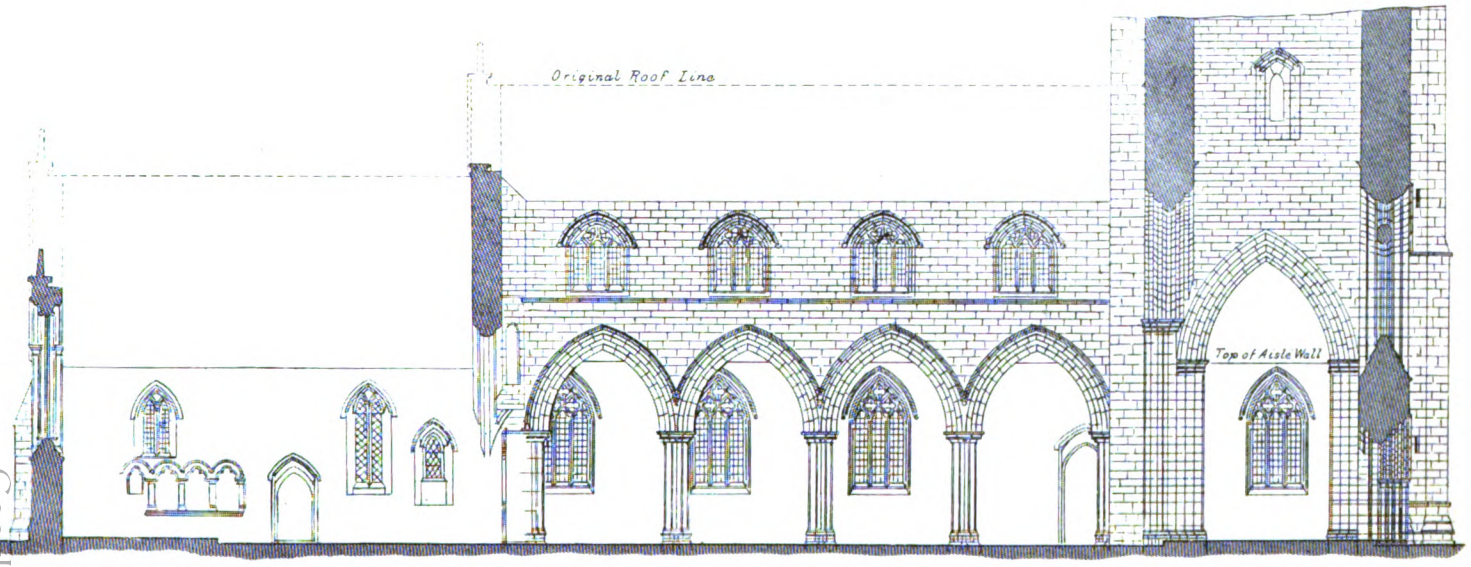
ANDREW'S CHURCH, HELPRINGHAM.

SECTION LOOKING SOUTH

All the Roofs are Modern



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church throughout on a larger scale, but they did it in the next generation. The first half of the fourteenth century was a great building period in the neighbourhood, and the churches of Heckington, Sleaford, and Ewerby, the steeple of Silk Willoughby, and a score of others, shew how the men of different parishes strove not to be behind one another in the improvement of their respective churches according to their means. They of Helpringham did as well as any, for in the place of their old small low nave they built a new and much larger one, having aisles and clerestory, and a fine tower and spire at the west end.

The accompanying drawings are from very careful measurements made thirteen years ago by Mr. Henry Walker (now of Leeds) and myself. A few timbers only remain of the old roofs, and the gables are lowered, and the east window has suffered thereby. The aisles have lost their parapets, and the merlons are gone from those of the tower. But in other respects the work is in excellent preservation. I have seldom met with a mediæval building so carefully set out as this is. The irregularities in the plans of old churches are well known, and some men would persuade us that they were made on purpose, and were intended to have some queer mystical meaning. Now I am unwilling to believe that our ancestors were such fools, as not always to have built straight and square if they could. They built irregularly because they had to fit their work to that which already existed, or because with no other instruments than a line and a square they found it difficult to set it out on a site which was already occupied, and which they could not see over or stretch a line across. At Helpringham the small size of the original church in comparison with that which they were building round it made the conditions more than usually near to those of building upon a free site, and consequently we find that the plan is as accurately set out as it would be at the present day.

In spite of this care in the laying down of the plan there are some irregularities in the work which at first sight seem arbitrary and uncalled for. For example, if you look at the longitudinal section you will notice that nothing seems to centre with anything else. The arcade is regular in itself, but seems to be set out without respect to the divisions of the aisle, and the clerestory windows again are not placed, as one would expect them to be, so as to centre with the arches below them. Some of these irregularities scarcely show in the work itself, and only become visible when laid down on paper, so they are not really faults in the design. But it was the appearance of them in working out the drawings and the attempt to explain them, which led me to seek out how the work had been set out, and, when that is found, they cease to appear arbitrary.

It is evident that the present nave, aisles, and steeple are of one design, and when they were begun there was a distinct intention

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of finishing them without delay. Nevertheless, at the old rate of building Parish Churches, they must have taken at least several years, and a good deal might be done before the old nave was pulled down; and so it appears to have been. If we look at the plan we find that there is just one place where the divisions of the arcades and of the aisles correspond. A line drawn through the centres of the first pair of pillars east of the tower passes also through those of the buttresses of the aisles next east of the doors. This is the master line, and it is a line just outside the west front of the original church. It is the line A B on the plan. All west of the line might be built before the old church was touched, and there is just enough difference in the work to prove that it really was so. There is a change of masonry in the aisle walls, which are faced with ashlar inside westwards of the line and not so eastwards; and the heads of the buttresses through which the line passes, and those west of them, are different from those to the east.

The whole must have been set out at once, and it seems to have been done thus. First the line A B was laid down parallel to the old west front and just clear of it. Perhaps care may have been taken to make sure that it was also parallel to the chancel arch. If it were not, the fact that it is so is due to the good setting out of the earlier church; but the general accuracy of their work makes me think that the fourteenth-century men were careful about this. Then putting the east walls of the aisles in a line with the chancel arch they laid out the side walls so that there was a buttress to each on the master line, another at the east corner, and two more placed at equal distances between them. They next, making proper allowance for responds, divided the distance from the chancel arch to the master line also into three equal parts, which gave the size of the bays of the arcade; and, as they wished to make the nave longer, they added another like bay west of the master line, which brought them to the tower; and the square of the tower gave the west end of the aisles, they being in this case carried along its sides.

Having thus set the work out on the ground they seem to have first built the tower, or at least the lower part of it, and the aisle walls as far as the line A B. It would have been possible to have built the side walls all at once, but they would have completely enclosed the old nave, and so compelled men to approach it through the new works, an inconvenience which seems to have been put off as long as it could be. But when the walls of the western part were built passage could be given through their doorways, and it is likely that the rest of the side walls was then built before the old church was touched; unless indeed part of it may have been pulled down to supply stuff for the new walls. Before the arcades could be completed, the old nave had to be cleared away; but it is likely that it was not done all at once, and that even this last work may have been

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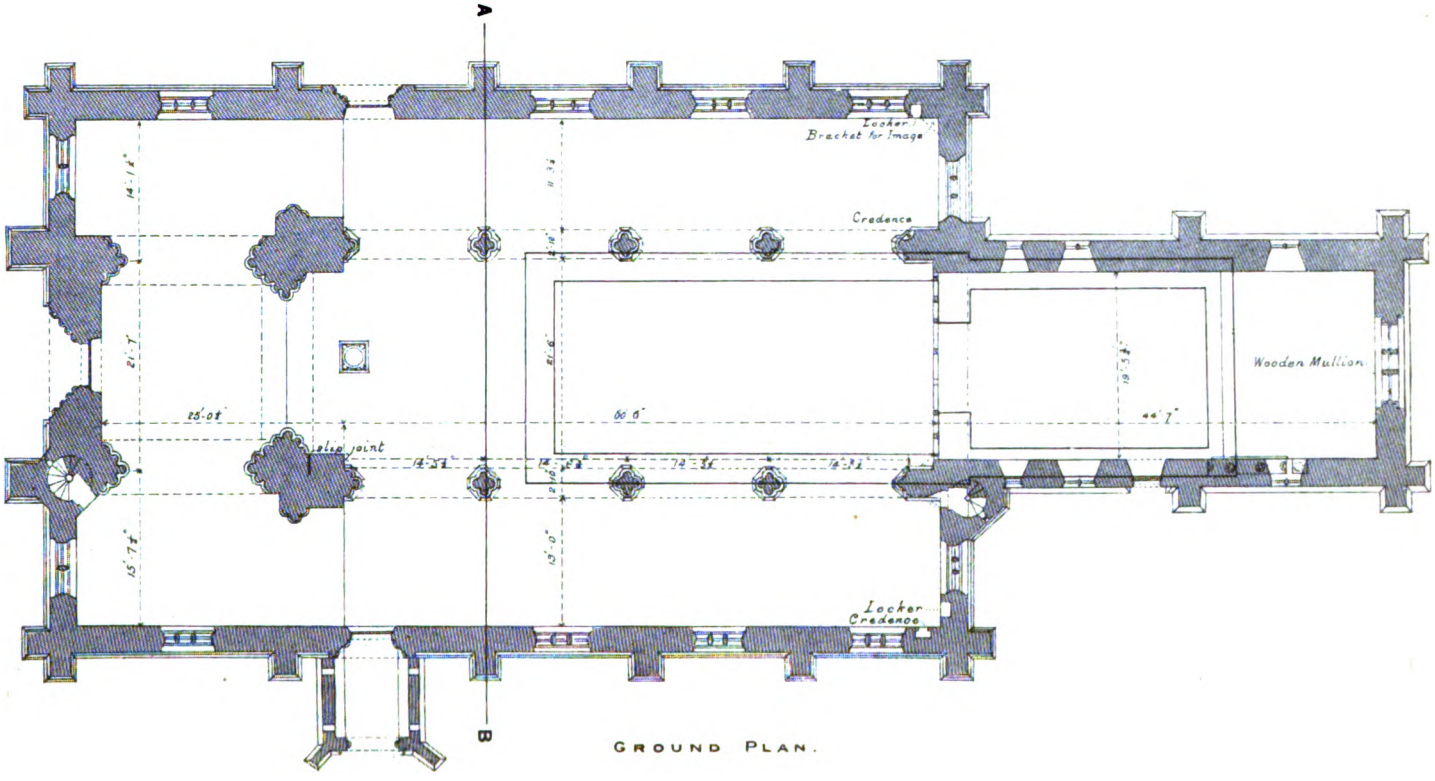
S. ANDREW'S CHURCH, HELPRINGHAM, LINCOLNSHIRE.



GROUND PLAN.

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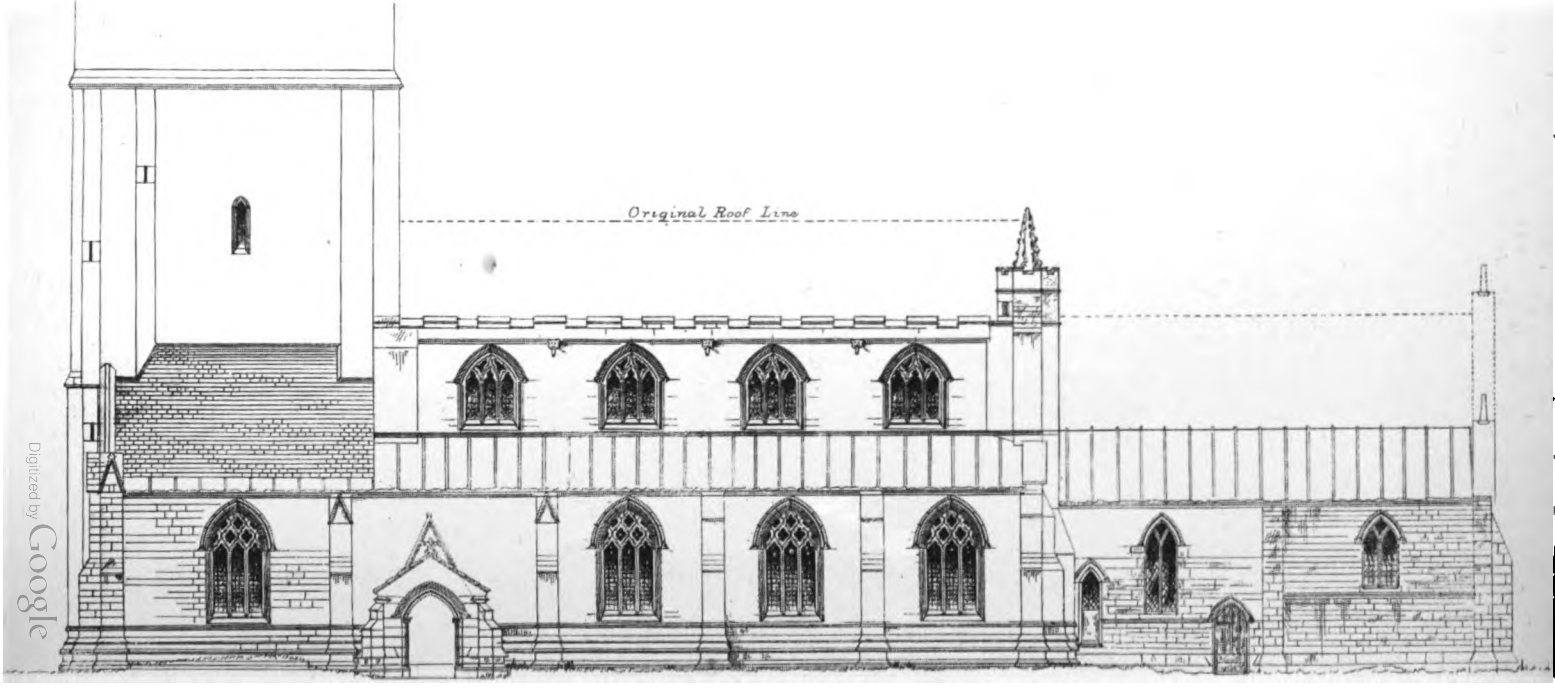
South Side.



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considerably advanced before the old nave ceased to be used. That time however came at last, and then men had to get on as well as they could with the chancel only, until they could take possession of the new work, which they would do long before it was, as we should think, fit to use.

The want of exact correspondence between the divisions of the arcades and the aisles has been shewn to have come quite naturally from the way in which the work was set out, and the same is also true of that between the arcades and the clerestory over them. The clerestory windows are spaced with regard to the *outside* of the building. If you test the south elevation you will find that the space between the buttress next the tower and the stair-turret at the other end has been divided into eight equal parts, and each alternate division is the centre of a window, so that the wall space at each end is half that between each two windows. In this matter the old designer certainly made a mistake, for the regular division outside is little or no advantage, and the slight eccentricity of the windows inside is a distinct fault. But it is interesting to know how it came about.

After the people of Helpringham had finished this new nave and steeple they seem never to have done much more to the church. I suspect that the Black Death which swept over the land in the middle of the fourteenth century put an end here, as it did in many other places, to the prosperity of which these great works are the proof. Fortunate were those towns which had completed what they had in hand before the evil day came. At Newark they were in the midst of it, and it took a century and a half to finish what they had begun. And in some places, what was stopped, was never afterwards taken up again.

The work at Helpringham was, as I have said, a much more complete rebuilding than we generally find, though it was not singular in its own neighbourhood and time. In most cases an aisle or a chapel only, or perhaps the chancel or steeple was undertaken at once, and so the order of the work is much more evident, and the old has a stronger influence on the form of the new. Often we find still smaller alterations, such as windows inserted in gables for the sake of the display of painted glass or in side walls near altars for the sake of more light. The latter were very common and often formed part of the adornment of an altar, which generally followed on the foundation of a chantry at it. Many have been destroyed by stupid "restorers" who do not know what they are doing, and who think themselves mighty clever when they have shewn that the window is an insertion and have destroyed it to make way for a sham earlier one of their own devising.

Whilst these changes were going on in the fabric there were of course corresponding developments in the furniture of the churches,

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but it would take too much time to follow them out now. The point I wish to direct attention to, is, that the forms of our old Parish Churches come of the way in which they grew, and are not, as in the case of modern ones, the work of any one mind. Plans are irregular, not because the old men specially loved irregularity, but because buildings once regular in form have had new members added to them at different times. You will not find that there is irregularity in the work undertaken at any one time, except where the necessity of fitting the old or some pecularity of the site has compelled it. Where, as at Helpringham, the work has been large enough to permit of a new and almost unfettered design, it is perfectly symmetrical. And in other cases there is often a visible effort to make the later work overcome the irregularity of the earlier. For example, where the nave arcades are of different dates and designs we find the added clerestory and the rebuilt aisle walls all in agreement with one another.

That many old churches have complicated and irregular plans is quite true. But they make a huge mistake who take this complication and irregularity for essential characteristics of them, and who imitate it in the modern churches which they profess to design in the spirit of the old. We who have to design new Parish Churches must imitate not so much what our ancestors *did* under very different conditions from ours, but what they *would have done* had they been in our present case. We must make them of few and simple parts, dignified in proportion and carefully studied with respect to their uses. These are far more important matters than mouldings, tracery, and carving, which some men seem to think are all that make the *style* of Gothic architecture.

There is also one other matter about which I would say a word in conclusion. It is the absurdity of talking about the "period" of an old Parish Church and pretending to "restore" it to its "original condition." In their "original condition" most of them were probably wooden shanties or huts of dry walling. Their history begins further back than we can trace it, and will go on still if we do not destroy it. The whole idea of "restoration," call it "conservative" or what you will, is radically wrong and destructive. You can not go back to what is past, and the attempt to do so leads only to destruction and falsification. Our business is to go *forward*. The churches belong to us for our lifetime as much as they did to our fathers, and we, as much as they, must keep them in repair, and as need comes alter them to suit new wants. But let our alterations add new chapters to the history instead of erasing old ones. The second half of the nineteenth century is not the least important period through which the English Church has passed, and it ought to leave as clear and unmistakable and pleasing a record of itself on the fabrics as have any of the past.

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